

Becoming a Kwoma

101 gether for raids against threatened or actual encroachments
 [24] by non-Kwoma peoples.
 361 Each subtribe is divided into several hamlets, most of
 [346] which are clustered about a "house tambran" or men's cere-
 monial lodge. A hamlet is usually named after its house tam-
 • [423] bran. The arrangement of dwellings in a hamlet is deter-
 [351] mined by hereditary ownership of land and also by the fact
 that level sites are very few, owing to the precipitous nature
 of the mountain slopes.

614 The patrilineal sib is the primary descent group among
 [62] the Kwoma. Although all the adult males of a hamlet are
 members of the same sib, the hamlets of a given sib are not
 necessarily contiguous, i.e., the descent groups are not com-
 pletely localized. All the members of a sib theoretically de-
 scend from a common totem ancestor. Thus the three sibs of
 Hongwam subtribe are the *Wanyi*, who descend from a pig,
 the *Hayamakwo*, who descend from a great fish hawk, and
 the *Tug*, who descend from the sago palm. Each of these sibs
 has a great many subsidiary totems, some of which are
 claimed by more than one sib. These lesser totems are vari-
 ously identified with birds, reptiles, fish, trees, plants, and
 parts of the human body.

613 Each sib is divided into lineages each of whose component
 families claims descent from a legendary hero. The men of a
 [361] lineage usually build their dwellings in a cluster which forms
 part of a hamlet. A lineage is composed of several family
 lines whose members descend from a common grandfather.
 The men of a single family line also build their houses near
 [594] one another. The smallest unit and the most compact is that
 formed by the sons of a father.

611 Thus a man remembers four ancestors in the male line: his
 father, his grandfather, a culture hero who is thought to
 have been his great grandfather, and, finally, his totem an-
 cestor who lived—according to Kwoma myth—back at the

[113] *ological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, Vol. XXXVI,
 Pt. III. The maps above referred to are: *Map of Sepik District* compiled
 by the Department of Lands and Mines, Rabaul, October, 1935, and *Sketch*
Map of Portion of Sepik District, Sydney, 1935, Oil Search Ltd. Geological
 Survey.

Adulthood

107

food for himself, his wife, and his children. If he fails to do so, he may be criticized by his relatives, and deserted by his wife.

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Gardening is an occupation which involves the cooperative endeavors of several persons.* The basic gardening group consists of the members of two or more closely related households, typically a father and his adult sons and their wives and children, or two or more adult brothers and their families. Sometimes a man will make a garden with his paternal uncle. Each adult male in the group has an equal share in the garden set aside for him and his family, the section being marked off with bamboo poles laid end to end on the ground. Each section is subdivided in the same way for every member of each family except the infants. This group cooperates in all phases of gardening. The males and females, children, adolescents, and adults have differing tasks allotted to them, but they work as a cooperative unit under the direction of the boss gardeners, the adult males of the group. A new function for the man is, therefore, to take the responsibility for planning and organizing gardening activities.

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Some of the gardening tasks are more effectively performed by a group larger than the gardening group. The Kwoma have a work-bee system to take care of this need. Whenever the boss gardeners decide that they need help on some phase of gardening, either in clearing the site, breaking the ground, or harvesting the crop, they gather together enough food for a feast. They and their families collect a surplus of sago flour and provide meat, preferably a wild pig. If no one has succeeded in spearing a pig, they process a still greater surplus of sago flour, trade it for fish from the river natives, and use this instead of pork. When they have gathered this supply of flour and meat, they announce, both on the house tambran gongs and by passing the word around, a work bee for the following day and request their

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* If all the details of the technique of gardening were presented here, the main theme—socialization—would be buried in a welter of detail. Only the major processes of gardening will therefore be presented, leaving the details for another publication.

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Becoming a Kwoma

476 relatives to help. All the members of the hamlet who do not
574 have pressing work of their own are expected to answer this
262 call and appear the next morning at the place where the
[203] work is to be done. The *brothers* of the married women of the
[621] households who are giving the bee are also expected to help
if they can. While the men work, the women prepare the feast.
Then, early in the afternoon, after a long morning's work,
the men stop and go to the house of one of the boss gardeners
where the feast is to be given. The men form a separate
group from the women, eat in a leisurely manner, smoke,
chew betel, and indulge in horseplay between courses. After
the meal the older men either gossip or nap while the boys
tease one another and play. The work is over for the day.
The Kwoma are perfectly familiar with the patterned be-
havior of these work parties, since they have participated in
them frequently during childhood and adolescence. When
they become adult they have to plan the work bees, direct
the gathering of food, and announce the day.

241 The first task in gardening is to choose a site, a decision
311 which rests with the boss gardeners. They must balance the
advantages and disadvantages of cultivating a plot in the
[417] hamlet or in an outlying district.⁵ If the garden is planted
[231] near the dwelling, it has to be enclosed by a fence to prevent
domestic pigs from rooting up the crop, but it is near at
hand. If a site is cleared in an outlying district, it may take
several hours to walk there, but it need not be fenced.

241 The garden site is usually cleared by means of a number
476 of work bees. Since it takes considerable time and effort to
provide food for the feast, the task of clearing a site is nor-
[462] mally spread over several weeks, and sometimes months. The
first task, which is performed by adolescent boys and men, is
to climb the trees and lop off the branches in order to let sun
down to the earth below. The old men and children clear the
brush and stack it and the cut branches into piles for
burning.

After the site has been cleared and the rubbish burned,

• [423] ⁵ Property rights, also, determine the choice. The division and ownership
of land will be discussed below.

443 an adult she takes the responsibility for seeing that a surplus
462 of flour is produced and for arranging the day for the next market.

421 By the time a Kwoma has reached adulthood, he has learned the system of property rights of his culture. He knows that garden produce belongs to the person on whose section it was grown, that sago flour belongs to the persons who process it, fish to the women who catch or buy them, a pig to the person who owns or kills it, pork to the person who receives it from the original owner, and tools to the person who makes or buys them. He also knows what liens his various relatives have upon his property and what liens he has
[685] upon the property of his relatives. He has learned that if he disregards the property rights of others he may expect them to punish him if they catch him, but he has also learned during childhood that one may often thief without being caught, and few Kwoma adults are above stealing if they are sure they will not be discovered.

• 423 It is not until adulthood that a Kwoma man is expected to
462 defend property rights in land. This duty falls upon him, his adult male relatives, the men of the subtribe, and the men of the tribe as a whole; women and children have no direct concern in the matter. A man's duties in the defense of property rights depend upon who transgresses them and under what circumstances such transgression takes place, and upon his membership in the tribe, subtribe, hamlet, lineage, and family line.

423 The Peilunga Range and the adjacent swamps are owned
619 by the Kwoma tribe as a whole, and as a member of this tribe a man is expected to defend this territory against conquest
[721] by another tribe. Such conflict rarely occurs, but a struggle
[75] over land in which all the subtribes of Kwoma banded together to annihilate and drive from the Peilunga Mountains a tribe who at one time shared the territory with them occurred during the lifetime of the grandfathers of the present
[48] generation. Minor disputes over boundaries with the tribes contiguous to Kwoma do not, however, concern the tribe as a

Adulthood

121

whole, but at most the subtribe and usually only the hamlet whose territory is under dispute.

If a dispute involving a considerable amount of sago swamp or gardening land arises between the members of two subtribes, all the adult men of each subtribe may eventually become involved. Such a dispute normally arises when someone extracts sago flour or plants a garden near or beyond the territorial boundary of his subtribe. Those of the other subtribe who control the land contiguous to the boundary normally claim trespass, destroy any tools which they may find, seize the produce, and even threaten personal harm. Unless the affair is settled quickly by the withdrawal of one or other of the parties concerned, each may call relatives to his support until the dispute finally becomes the concern of both subtribes. When such a situation arises, the disputed land is normally left unused by both parties until the affair has been settled by an intertribal court meeting.¹⁴

A man has certain duties with respect to the defense of all lands claimed by the members of his hamlet. These duties apply only when the transgressor of property rights is a member of some other hamlet. Again minor disputes may be settled by the parties concerned, but, if they are not, they are settled by a meeting of the domestic court which a man must attend in order to defend his *brothers*. In a similar way property disputes between members of different lineages in the same hamlet and between families in the same lineage are finally settled by a court meeting attended by the men of the largest group involved.

The rights and duties with respect to land are thus determined by a man's membership in the various groups described above. Since membership in family line, lineage, and hamlet follows patrilineal descent, inheritance may likewise be considered as patrilineal. The Kwoma do not, however, distinguish inheritance of land from descent. Hence the rules which determine to what family line, lineage, and hamlet a

¹⁴ An intertribal court meeting will be described below with reference to payment of wergild after head-hunting raids.

- 423 man belongs govern where he has the right to build his house,
611 plant his garden, and gather sago flour. In order to clarify
428 this principle it is necessary to show the relation between
these descent groups and land.
- 423 Each family line has control of a not too clearly delimited
351 district near the house tambran of the hamlet on which its
594 male members build their houses. The exact site is decided
613 by the builder with the consent of the other men of the family
line. The districts of each family line are clustered with re-
241 spect to their lineage affiliations. The gardening land which
423 immediately surrounds the hamlet is divided into large sec-
613 tions belonging to the various lineages of the hamlet, and
59 each of these is subdivided into districts controlled by the
various family lines. Similarly, each lineage controls one or
more sections of gardening land in the outlying districts of
the subtribe and several sections of the sago swamp. Each
of these plots is subdivided into subplots administered by the
family line. If a man wishes to plant a garden or extract
sago flour, he must choose a site on one of these subplots and
must obtain the consent of the other members of his family
line.
- 59 The number of persons in a family line is kept relatively
constant through adoption. Those lines who have few or no
[423] sons adopt boys from more numerous family lines. By this
[428] process the relationship between men and land is kept rela-
tively constant in a society where land may be neither bought,
sold, nor willed to a particular heir.
- 885 The responsibility for defending property rights in land,
421 produce, and tools falls more fully on the shoulders of a man
593 during adulthood than during the earlier periods of his life.
602 He not only must defend his own property against theft and
trespass, but must assume most of the responsibility for pre-
venting property violations against members of his immedi-
ate family and for helping his relatives to defend their rights
against outsiders.¹¹ In order to prevent trespass or theft

[683] ¹¹ Theft and trespass are considered to be aggressive acts by the Kwoma, and sanctions and retaliation with respect to them are discussed in detail below.

131 The Kwoma are a mountain-dwelling people. Except for the southeastern
133 slope of Ambunti Mountain, site of the Ambunti Police Post, they control the entire segment of the Pellungwa Range which lies northwest of the Sepik.

[262] The territory they claim also includes enough of the sago swamps at the foot of these mountains to provide them with more than enough of the sago flour which is a staple in their diet. They are surrounded by swamp and
101 river tribes. Living in the sago swamp somewhat to the northwest are the
131 Amiki and Sowel people, and on a little group of hills to the northeast, separated by the swamp from the main range, live a half-dozen households who
[197] call themselves Yelagu. The Malu, Yambon, and Yessan, the river neighbors of the Kwoma, are linguistically and culturally distinct from the mountain
[191] people. When they converse with each other, each speaks his own language, which the other understands.

619 The Kwoma tribe consists of four subtribes: the Tangvishamp, the Urambanj, the Koriast, and the Hongvum. Their territories are contiguous.
[101] The Hongvum, who dwell nearest Ambunti, were the group from which nearly all the materials here presented were gathered, only a brief trip being made to
[197] the other three subtribes. These four subtribes, although speaking the
[721] same language and bound by not a few ties of trade and intermarriage, are distinct social entities and not above carrying on head-hunting raids against one another. More frequently, however, they will band together for raids against threatened or actual encroachments by non-Kwoma peoples.

361 Each subtribe is divided into several hamlets, most of which are
[368] clustered about a "house Tambaran" or men's ceremonial lodge. A hamlet is usually named after its house tambaran. The arrangement of dwellings in
[423] a hamlet is determined by hereditary ownership of land and also by the paucity of level sites, owing to the precipitous nature of the mountain slopes.

582 have no connection is number one, your mother's number two, and your father's
 615 number three in preference. To marry outside the tribe was all right. In his particular case, he had been a Waskuk lad adopted by a Bangus family. The taboo worked for him both in regard to his own and to his adopted family's social groups, so there was a taboo phratric for him in both Bangus and Waskuk.

[595] He actually had two wives, one a Bangus and the other a Waskuk, but each of them were members of the preferred phratric.

123 When he left after the morning's work, we gave him a bottle of bay rum and a paring knife for his bananas; he went away apparently very pleased.

124 In the afternoon, Sowinambi, the Bangus lulusi (a chief appointed by
 [622] the Australians) came to visit. He is one of the older men of influence,
 [648] and we were pleased to see that he was very friendly toward us. He knows
 [141] only a few words of pidgin, but by a combination of that and the little
 [619] Waskuk that we know, we were able to get a check on the phratries and their names, and also the social divisions of the other tribes of the culture area, Tengwishamp, Urambanj and Koriasi. According to him the first and last have four divisions each, and Urambanj only two. The native names for these phratries is koromp. Our attempts to get his geneology were not very successful.

● 423 The property question is going to be fun. In getting the names of geographical features, particularly mountains nearby, we've been told by some that they belong to individuals, and by others that they belong to the tribe as a whole. A Waskuk told me that all the biggest mountains were his peoples' and that the Bangus owned one measly little hill near the swamp.

103 The Sepik, a few curving miles of which we can see down below between the Ambunti and Wasoku ranges is called nambu.

114 People on the coast can hear our groans of despair whenever we stop and go over our special problems, wondering if we'll ever get evidence which is pertinent to them. Our discouragement however, is not official.

619 The land (both mountain and surrounding sago swamp) of the Hongwan
 423 people is divided into various large sections which belong to either
 631 Wanyi, Mayamakwo, or Tug. These sections are not contiguous, and are
 614 specifically bounded by marked trees, rocks, streams, etc. These sections
 are further divided into subsections owned by brother, real or classificatory.

[428] Land is passed on to son, or brother's son or mother's brother's son.

241 From this land, the people, working in family groups, get a living.

[262] There are two food products which stand far above all others in dietary
 [462] importance, sago and yams. Both sexes and the children work in the planting,
 cultivation, and harvesting of these crops, but only men can wash the sago
 pith and plant the yams. There is no season for this or for any other of the
 food products. Yams are planted on the steep side hills, the tops of
 trees first being lopped off and burned. The breaking of the ground is done
 with a digging stick. Dry taro, coconut, spinach, banana and recently

222 corn and melons are also cultivated. Beside these food products the leaves
 262 of several wildgrowing trees and shrubs, and various berries are eaten.

224 Hunting is quite secondary. Pigs which are the most important of hunted
 [796] animals are usually speared only in preparation for a feast, or, if
 killed at other times call for a special pig-eating feast.

[223] Cassowaries are also killed by spearing, but to bag one is a rare event.
 Smaller birds are very rarely shot with a bow and arrow. Snakes and

[857] lizards are a delicacy supplied by the young boys who either shoot them
 222 with a bow and arrow or club them. A large grub which feeds on the sago
 palm is a particular delicacy. Neither a man nor his parents may eat the
 262 yams he has planted or an animal or bird he has killed. It is thought
 826 that the man's blood goes into these food products, and that a man, eating

439 his own blood will die. Fish are obtained by trade and a few caught. Pigs
 226 and dogs are domesticated.
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123 the child didn't seem to mind. I played with him, much to the amusement of the women. Then I gave him back to Yat who played with him for a moment and passed the child to Kar. He gave the baby to Hamb who took it to its mother.

124 We talked about Suw; Kar, Kis and Yat said that it was sorcery and
754 went over the rigamarole about making sorcery that it was a native custom and that if the important men of Hongwan would come to see the boy, he wouldn't be sick. If they came, the sorcery would go away and he would be better again.

614 The importance of a son's growing up to take over the activities of
593 the sib was stressed. Girls are not important because when they marry,
562 they go to another house tambaran. The boys are important because they are
591 needed to take care of the coconut trees, betel nut, and other crops planted
241 here. They stressed the fact that the ground itself belonged to them,
423 needed caretakers, and told the story of the projected new house tambaran to be built when Gwiyap, May, Fit, Mar, Kum, and Gempí were big enough.

114 December 16, 1936. I wrote letters all day. We got news that Suw was
443 better "liklik". Today is the market with Yambon--Hamb went down and found
685 his canoe has been smashed by Brugnuwi; he was annoyed and wants to go to Ambunti to make court. We told him it was alright. He has to wait for the Yambons who are buying a pig from Marok for their sing-sing -- so he went to help them. Soon after lunch Tip's narembay, Mangviyaf, and three or four others came in, 'Sourpuss' being one of them. We talked with them. Mangviyaf said that his canoe (the one Eve's boy took) was at Ambunti and asked if we would bring it back for him. We agreed. Then he said that the second bunch of bananas were pretty nearly ripe, and he would bring them in. Mangviyaf had sat down and pretty soon when our talk ran out, he lay

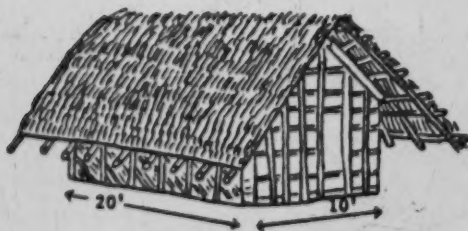
Chapter V

Field Notes Not Previously Published

House and building construction

342 Houses are not permanent enough to be important in inheritance. If
 [428] a man dies, the remainder of the family lives in his house until it falls
 [423] down or begins to leak. The house, however, is considered to be the
 property of the male children. A house may last ten years, and is
 [372] abandoned when it falls apart. The available timber is used for other
 purposes-- firewood, for example.

343 The figure below illustrates a house for storing yams and taro (keyakd)
 342 but is identical in construction to a dwelling house.



There are two central posts at either end of the outside room. The roof overhangs in either direction. The construction is identical to the room of a dwelling house. The porches are extended from this frame.

Sago Plots

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Sago plots are owned either individually or by brothers or other close relatives in undivided shares. These plots are scattered widely without reference to nearness to the sib, except that there is usually one plot at some point near the house in case of a sudden shortage. These plots are inherited patrilineally by the son or older brother's son.

[428]

The division of the plots depends on the exigencies of the situation.

If two brothers quarrel about the sago in an undivided section, their father or some older man whose decision they respect will divide the

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plot. On the other hand, if two people are friends or close relatives, and their plots are adjoining, they may combine plots and work them together.

Mar and Owiya together work about a half dozen plots. Their grandfathers and fathers owned them in common--their grandfathers marked them out.